EXPLORING 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In a time when hierarchy is being replaced by teamwork, participative leadership, empowering employees, improving customer service and re-engineering, employers need to look at other alternatives that will support and enhance personnel development. Organizations are asking personnel for more productivity with less resources. Layers of management are being reduced causing increased work loads and supervisors are managing larger work groups with larger spans of control.

The traditional top down supervisor-only evaluation systems are no longer practical. Supervisors with increased workloads and a large number of reporting relationships lack the opportunity to observe and provide fair, accurate, credible and motivating performance appraisals.

The purpose of this research project was to gather information that would assist in the development of a fair, accurate, honest and objective performance appraisal system.

This research project utilizes an evaluative research methodology. The following questions were answered while completing this project.

1. What is 360-degree feedback performance appraisals?

2. Should 360-degree feedback be used for development or for management decisions such as raises and promotion also?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of 360-degree feedback?

4. Should the raters providing feedback be anonymous?

The procedures included an extensive literature review of three research papers located at the National Fire Academy and several books by noted authors on the subject of multiple source performance appraisals. An inter-department survey was conducted to determine how personnel felt about our current performance appraisal system and the possibility of a multi-source performance appraisal. Telephone conversations were conducted with the authors of two of the research papers used for this project.

The results of this research project confirmed that most organizations are using the traditional supervisor-to-subordinate appraisal. It also concludes that multi assessors increase validity and that subordinates and peers are in a better position to provide accurate feedback to their supervisors and co-workers. The survey concluded that personnel are dissatisfied with the traditional performance appraisal and are willing to evaluate their superiors, peers and subordinates.

The recommendation is that personnel growth and development will be more probable with the adoption of 360-degree feedback performance appraisal.

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INTRODUCTION

The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services, like most other fire departments, has always utilized the traditional single-source performance appraisal assessment completed by the supervisor. Although the forms have changed periodically over the years, the theories, principals and implementation have remained the same.

The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services (WF/RS) believes that in an age where hierarchy is being replaced by teamwork, participative leadership, empowering employees, improving customer service and re-engineering have made traditional single-source assessments illogical and impractical. We feel the need to look at other alternatives that will support and enhance personnel development and growth of our organization.

Since the elimination of our shift commander positions, we have not been able to properly evaluate our officers and personnel in the utilization of the Incident Command System during emergency operations.

The WF/RS leadership team was introduced to a performance appraisal system called 360-degree feedback during one of its staff advance meetings. The qualities seemed to fit into our scheme and we wanted to research the system in more depth.

The purpose of this project was to research and provide the information available to assist the departments employee evaluation review committee to develop an evaluation that would produce a fair, accurate and non opinionated performance appraisal of our employees during normal and emergency operations.

This paper uses an evaluative research methodology. The questions to be answered were:

1. What is 360-degree feedback performance appraisals?

2. Should 360-degree feedback be used only for development or for management decisions such as raises and promotions also?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of 360-degree feedback?

4. Should the raters providing feedback be anonymous?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services went through a reorganization in 1993. The finished product resulted in adding two deputy chiefs, one over operations and one over support services. Five battalion chiefs were also promoted to head fire prevention, training and three shift commanders.

In 1994 the City of Wilson underwent personnel cutbacks. The WF/RS lost seven positions one in which was a deputy chief.

In 1996 , the remaining deputy chief left the department for a fire chief's position in another city. Also, one of the shift commanders retired.

Due to budget restraints and cutbacks, we felt we needed to re-engineer our organization. We were faced with being more productive with less resources. As fire department leaders we need to periodically examine our management structure. The management structure should be altered to fit the service needs of the customer and the management needs of the employee.

The alternative selected was to make the four remaining battalion chiefs division heads and place them on a forty (40) hour work week. At the present time the department has a division chief over fire prevention, one over support services (administration) and one over operations. The vacant deputy and battalion chief positions were eliminated.

The reorganization also eliminated the shift commanders on all three shifts. More authority, responsibility and accountability was delegated to the company officer level. By doing so, our organization has reduced hierarchy by removing layers of management and putting more emphasis on empowerment, teamwork, continuous learning, individual development and self responsibility.

The operations chief has complete management and responsibility over operations from eight a.m. to five p.m. A division chief is on stand-by after 5:00 p.m. which is rotated between the division chiefs one week a month.

The operations chief is responsible, with input from the other division chiefs, for the performance appraisal of fifteen (15) company level officers. By working an eight to five work schedule and doing mostly administrative duties it has diminished the quality time he has to spend with his officers which inhibits his ability to provide a fair an accurate evaluation.

Before being eliminated, the battalion chiefs (shift commanders) use to respond on most emergency calls providing ample opportunity to evaluate their officers on the emergency scene in firefighting strategy, tactics and their ability to execute proper procedures utilizing the Incident Command System. Since the reorganization, the division chief of operations is limited to the amount of emergency calls he responds on. This has a

positive side by providing the company officer with more empowerment to make decisions and

manage the emergency operations. It has also limited the operation chief's ability to observe

their skills, growth and ability. At present, the division chief is dispatched on the following:

- Church fires

- School fires

- Warehouse fires

- Structural collapse/Cave-in confined space

- Mass casualty reports

- Airplane crash

- Train wrecks

- Blowing gas incidents

- Hazardous material

- Mutual aid alarms

- All second alarms

- When requested by incident commander

The emergencies listed above make up less than 5% of the emergency response calls by

the WF/RS.

In response to the company officer who has inherited more responsibility, authority and

an increased workload, the supervisor may not have sufficient opportunity to observe employee

performance. It is imperative that someone be in a position to observe, evaluate

and point out an employee's strengths, weaknesses and needs for his future growth and development.

This research project relates directly to the subject matter covered in the course Executive Analysis Of Fire Service Operations In Emergency Management. The concept is based on the Incident Command System (ICS). 360- degree feedback will improve our emergency operations, ICS and community risk assessment which requires teamwork and focus from all levels of the organization.

The author of this paper feels that 360-degree feedback is a tool that can be used to give all personnel a fair and accurate performance appraisal in all aspects of the job. Peers and subordinates will be providing feedback and evaluating the officers. This will only improve our Incident Command System which requires knowing strengths and weaknesses of all participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was to explore a new performance appraisal model that turns the appraisal process upside down known as 360-degree feedback. Hopefully it will provide quality information that can be utilized by The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services Employee Evaluation Review Committee to create and implement a new performance appraisal model for employee assessment and performance improvement. If implemented, its intended purpose will greatly enhance personnel development and maximize the utilization by department personnel of our Incident Command System.

The following quote by John F. Welch, Jr., CEO, GE was taken from the book 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, pg. 3).

Any company that's going to make it in the 1990's and beyond has got to find a way to engage the mind of every single employee. If you're not thinking all the time about making every person more valuable, you don't have a chance. What's the alternative? Wasted minds? Uninvolved people? A labor force that's angry or bored? That doesn't make sense.

360-Degree feedback is aimed at improving performance by providing a better awareness of strengths and weaknesses. The employee receives feedback, in anonymous form, on performance ratings from peers, superiors and subordinates (Kaplan & Palus, 1994).

Feedback from multiple sources, such as superiors, peers, subordinates and others has a more powerful impact on people than information from a single source, such as their immediate supervisor. Employees view performance information from multiple sources as fair, accurate, credible and motivating. They are more likely to be motivated to change their work habits to obtain the esteem of their co-workers than the respect of their supervisors (Edwards & Ewin, 1996).

The supervisor-only performance appraisal is subjective and relies on the supervisor's judgment. They are time-consuming and are generally disliked by those who give and receive them. They are typically given once a year assessing the employees work

performance from a subjective point of view and providing management information for decisions on pay and promotions (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

360 Degree Feedback improves the quality of performance measures by using multi-raters providing a more balanced and comprehensive view. The information is more reliable, valid and credible because the providers interact regularly with the employee at work (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

Many organizations have found that single source appraisals provide inflated evaluations, giving nearly all ratee's high performance ratings. This process creates an environment in which employees feel entitled to regular raises and promotions without providing them the information needed for development. Managers find it difficult to provide specific and critical feedback so they tend to shy away from addressing performance problems.

The 360-degree feedback appraisal, also known as multi-source assessment or full circle feedback, gathers evaluation data from all of those who work most closely with the person being evaluated, regardless of position. The collective intelligence these people provide gives the appraisee a clear understanding of personal strengths as well as areas that need further development (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). A prime advantage is that 360 provides a more comprehensive view of employee performance. Not only does this method provide feedback from a variety of viewpoints, it also minimizes the bias problems that are inherent to evaluations. The more appraisers an employee has, the more likely the biases of the raters will tend to cancel one another out, and the more their perspectives will combine to give a complete , accurate and honest picture.

In the research paper <u>Subordinate Appraisal Of Supervisors An Improvement In Appraisal Technique</u> (Simms, 1996) recommended an action plan be developed to implement a subordinate appraisal system in the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department. The results of his study indicated that subordinate appraisal of supervisors could be a viable accepted system that could improve the overall performance appraisal process.

David Lobdell in his research project <u>Selecting An Appropriate Performance Appraisal Program For Spokane Valley Fire Department</u>, (1997) recommended that 360 degree appraisal was the most beneficial for a fire department in today's work environment. Four basic methods were identified in his research: (1) the conventional top down, (2) the peer rating, (3) the bottom up where employees rate their supervisors, (4) the 360 degree evaluation which he states is a combination of the other three.

Lobdell recommended that the evaluation be implemented carefully and that they should be used only for employee self evaluation and development. The individual ratings should be kept confidential and should be fairly short. He recommended that training must be conducted for both giving and receiving feedback before the program is implemented, and the program should be evaluated periodically and modified to meet the changing needs of the organization. He recommended the evaluation be fairly short and that it should be able to be completed in about thirty (30) minutes. The performance on which the employee is being rated should be clearly understood and related to the position held. There should be a minimum of five to six evaluators to protect anonymity and provide sufficient perspective. The immediate supervisor of the appraisee should receive the completed evaluations. He should tabulate them onto a clean form with the comments

interpreted or paraphrased to assure anonymity before discussing the composite rating with the employee being evaluated.

Research obtained by Roberto Rivera's research project <u>Performance Appraisals A Change From Single Source To Multi Source Evaluations</u> (1996) indicated that multi source assessments are the wave of the future. The purpose of his research project was to evaluate existing performance appraisals in the fire service and determine their effectiveness. The El Paso Fire Departments current performance appraisal system was examined and compared to those revealed in his research. The results of his research lead to choosing 360-degree feedback as a replacement for El Paso Fire Departments performance appraisals.

A telephone interview was conducted with Deputy Chief Roberto Rivera of El Paso Fire Department and with Assistant Chief David Lobdell of The Spokane Valley Fire Department to find out if they had implemented the 360-degree feedback appraisal system in their departments. Both had recommended 360 in their research projects.

A survey was planned to find out how many fire departments were using multi source appraisals. The survey was abandoned due to research obtained from the three research projects mentioned, through their recent surveys, revealed that most fire departments are still using the traditional one-on-one, top down performance appraisals.

SUMMARY

In summary, the wealth of information in the literature review has stimulated the possibility and the advantages of a 360-degree feedback performance appraisal system. All the information reviewed has been favorable and positive of 360-degree feedback. Roberto Rivera had implemented the system, on a trial basis to portions of his department. The results were positive and well received by both officers and subordinates. David Lobdell and Rivera had both recommended it for their departments.

Many sources were studied but are not listed in the reference section due to being redundant in their information. They all seem to agree with each other and favor that 360-degree feedback is the wave of the future. The only point there is disagreement on is whether 360 should be used for development only or should it be used for management decisions such as pay raises and promotions also.

The information in this research paper will be provided to The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services Employee Evaluation Review Committee to examine and consider as one alternative to our present system.

PROCEDURES

The procedures used in this research project was to exercise an extensive literature research to obtain as much information as possible on the most recent type of performance appraisal being utilized today. It was mostly directed at exploring information and research pertaining to 360-degree feedback. The author was searching for other fire

departments that were using the 360-degree feedback system to find out how successful it was for their organization and any problems they had encountered.

Three research papers found at the Learning Resource Center at The National Fire Academy provided valuable information needed to complete the project. The three paper's reviewed are contained in the literature review section of this paper. Several books written on multi- source evaluations were also used which are listed in the reference section. Telephone conversations were conducted with the authors of two of the research paper's reviewed in this project.

Roberto Revera of Texas El Paso Fire Department said he implemented the 360-degree feedback to three different stations on three different shifts on a trial basis for his research project. The feedback he received was positive. The subordinates enjoyed giving feedback to their officers and felt it improved their relationship. The officers felt they had improved from the feedback they had received. One officer said it was too short a period to really benefit from it. Roberto said it has not been implemented because all city departments use the same type of evaluation and he has not been able to sell it to all departments (R. Revera, phone conversation, November 17, 1998).

David Lobdell of the Washington Spokane Valley Fire Department, who also recommended that 360-degree feedback be implemented in their department, said at this time it is on the back burner. He delegated it to a newly appointed battalion chief as a probationary project and it never got implemented. He has not had time to re-delegate it at this time but does have plans to implement it in the near future (D. Lobdell, phone conversation, November 17, 1998).

An inter-department survey was conducted to find out how many were satisfied or dissatisfied with our current evaluation system. The purpose was also to find out how they felt about the idea of a multi-source assessment performance appraisal. The following survey was distributed:

EFOP RESEARCH PROJECT SURVEY

1.   What is your current rank?_____

2.   I am satisfied with our current evaluation form and system.

     Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3.   I would be willing to evaluate my superiors, peers and subordinates.

     Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

4.   I would be willing to accept an evaluation from my peers and subordinates.

     Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5.   I think evaluations should be associated with pay raises.

     Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6.   I think pay raises should be associated with promotions.

     Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7.   Additional comments:_____

_____

_____

Sixty four (64) of eighty two (82) personnel employed with the department were hand delivered a survey form and given a brief explanation of its purpose. They were told the results would be documented in this research project and would also be provided to the employee evaluation review committee. Many of the employees were not educated about multi-source/360 evaluations and a brief explanation of how it proceeds was given stressing the importance and guarantee of anonymity.

The sixty four (64) surveys included seventeen (17) firefighters, twenty five (25) engineers and twenty one (21) officers. The make up of officers included fire inspectors, three (3) lieutenants, thirteen (13) captains, four (4) divisions chiefs and the fire chief. One survey form was excluded due to not answering all the questions bringing the total number of surveys used to sixty three (63). This represents seventy six percent (76%) of the department participating in the survey.

The two secretaries were overlooked and not provided the opportunity to participate in the survey. Sixteen (16) personnel were unavailable due to vacation, sick leave or attending school at the time of the survey.

LIMITATIONS

The author was unable to locate any data that spoke out against the 360-degree feedback performance appraisal. In order to get a true picture you need to evaluate the pros and cons. All the literature reviewed was favorable of the 360 even though a limited amount of disadvantages were covered.

It is questionable whether the respondents of the survey by The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services personnel had a good understanding of the 360-degree feedback performance appraisal. It is assumed respondents answered the survey honestly. They were given very little time to answer the survey and a brief definition of the 360 and how it works. The unavailability of some personnel due to leave time could possibly skew the results.

RESULTS

This section will provide answers to the original research questions along with a narrative description of the findings of the study.

1.   What is 360-degree feedback performance appraisals?

From the literature reviewed, 360-degree feedback is a new model for performance feedback and appraisal. 360 turns the appraisal process upside down. It assesses employee performance and development from multi perspectives such as supervisors, peers, subordinates, customers and clients. It is aimed at improving performance by providing a better awareness of strengths and weaknesses. The employee receives feedback from multiple sources in anonymous form, compares them with self-ratings, gets limited coaching and sets goals for improvement. It is a process of feeding back to a person how others see him or her from people who work most closely with them and know them best. 360 serves as a supplement to, not a replacement for, supervisory review.

2.   Should 360-degree feedback be used for development or for management

decisions such as raises and promotions also?

The answer to this question falls into three general categories: (1) for development only, (2) for performance appraisal; or (3) for development and performance appraisal.

Victoria Pollman believes in using 360-degree feedback strictly for development purposes only. She believes that using it for appraisal supports the "Theory X" philosophy and makes it punitive by its very nature (Bracken, Dalton, Jako, McCauley, Pollman and Hollenbeck, 1997).

David W. Bracken believes the full power of 360 is not maximized when it is used for development only. He states that multi rater feedback for decision making has worked in many organizations (Bracken, Dalton, Jako, McCauley, Pollman and Hollenbeck, 1997).

Studies have shown that when the ratings can influence another's career when used for decision making purposes, both self-ratings and the ratings of co-workers tend to be inflated (Fleenor and Prince, 1997). Whether 360 is being used for development only or performance appraisal, the raters should be held accountable to provide honest, fair and unbiased feedback.

Whether 360 should be used for management decisions or development only is the most significant disagreement among proponents who have provided information on the subject. Though this has been debated there is no clear right or wrong answer.

Cynthia D. McCauley (Bracken, Dalton, Jako, McCauley, Pollman and Hollenbeck, 1997) attended a debate where Dalton and Pollman presented their views as

to why 360-degree assessments should be used for feedback and development only while

Bracken and Jako expressed these type of assessments were appropriate for use in

administrative decision-making also. After hearing the wealth of information and experience

from both sides on the topic, she found herself unable to take one side or the other.

The information obtained leads the author of this research paper to believe it should be

left up to the organization who wishes to implement 360-degree feedback on what it should be

used for. Each organization must decide what will work best for them.

3.   What are the advantages and disadvantages of 360-degree feedback?

Some advantages and disadvantages are listed below:

Advantages:

- The feedback is more honest, reliable and valid than traditional appraisals from the

  supervision only.

- Feedback from multiple sources has a more powerful impact than information from a single

  source.

- No action has more power for motivating employee behavior change than feedback from

  credible work associates.

- Employers are more strongly motivated to change work behaviors to obtain the esteem of

  their co-workers.

- They are typically not as time consuming for the supervisor as the traditional performance

  appraisal.

- They offer a more balanced and comprehensive view.

- When using 360 degree feedback systems work associates are rarely reluctant to identify poor performance of co-workers.

- One person performance appraisals are subject to claims of bias or partiality.

- Multi source offers substantial stronger legal protection.

Disadvantages:

- If co-workers like the individual being rated, they are concerned about doing or saying anything that may hurt them.

- If raters disliked the individual they may decide that this is a good time to get even.

- Is the use of anonymous raters legally practical?

- Even when the feedback is anonymous, the recipient may be able to identify the source.

- Subordinates often cannot evaluate the supervisor's work as it relates to management objectives

- There should be five or six evaluators to provide sufficient perspective and to protect anonymity.

- Raters may lack proper training.

4.   Should the raters providing feedback be anonymous?

Many employees will not provide feedback without respondent anonymity. When anonymity is not guaranteed their responses tend to be highly inflated.

360-Degree works only when respondent anonymity is assured. Many times people say, "We must trust one another around here and be honest

with our feedback," or "We want people to be able to confront their rater directly, and get all the information out in the open." But this approach encourages people to give only positive information. People are not stupid: They will not give the difficult feedback if there is any chance the feedback can be traced to them. No amount of training changes this aspect of human behavior (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, pg. 158).

All the information reviewed agreed that to address the issue of retribution and accountability and increase the likelihood that raters will provide candid feedback that was accurate , honest and fair anonymity must be assured.

Survey

A survey was conducted of The Wilson Fire and Rescue Services personnel to determine how they felt about our current performance appraisal system and what their thoughts would be on a global type (360) performance appraisal system. The results, for the most part, was surprising.

The first question on the survey form asked for each employee to specify his rank. The purpose was so the data could be compiled separately by rank and also in totality by the department as a whole.

To the second statement 26.1% of the non-officers (firefighters and engineers) agreed that they were satisfied with our current evaluation form and process. 42.8% disagreed and 30.9% strongly disagreed. 23.8% of the officers (inspectors, lieutenants,

captains and chiefs) agreed that they were satisfied with our current evaluation form and

process. 52.3% disagreed and 23.8% strongly disagreed. When tallied by the department as a

whole 25.3% agreed, 46% disagreed and 28.5% strongly disagreed. The closeness of the

percentages between the officers and non-officers was quite surprising as was displayed

throughout this survey.

Table 1

Percentage of Satisfaction with Current Evaluation System

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	0	26.1%	42.8%	30.9%
Officers	0	23.8%	52.3%	23.8%
Departments	0	25.3%	46.0%	28.5%

To the third statement 26.1% of the non-officers strongly agreed that they would be

willing to evaluate their superiors, peers and subordinates. 59.5% agreed, 7.1% disagreed and

7.1% strongly disagreed. 23.8% of the officers strongly agreed, 66.6% agreed, 4.7%

disagreed and 4.7% strongly disagreed. When tallied as a whole 25.3% strongly agreed,

61.9% agreed, 6.3% disagreed and 6.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 2

Percentage Willing To Evaluate Superiors, Peers, and Subordinates

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	26.1%	59.5%	7.1%	7.1%
Officers	23.8%	66.6%	4.7%	4.7%
Departments	25.3%	61.9%	6.3%	6.3%

To the forth statement 26.1% of the non-officers strongly agreed that they would be willing to accept an evaluation from their peers and subordinates. 73.8% agreed, 2.3% disagreed and 7.1% strongly disagreed. 28.5% of the officers strongly agreed, 66.6% agreed, 4.7% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. Tallied as a whole 26.9% strongly agreed, 71.4% agreed, 3.1% disagreed and 4.7% strongly disagreed.

Table 3

Percentage Willing To Accept Evaluation From Peers And Subordinates

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	26.1%	73.8%	2.3%	7.1%
Officers	28.5%	66.6%	4.7%	0
Departments	26.9%	71.4%	3.1%	4.7%

To the fifth statement 16.6% of the non-officers strongly agreed that evaluations should be associated with pay raises. 30.9% agreed, 30.9% disagreed and 21.4% strongly disagreed. 19% of the officers strongly agreed, 42.8% agreed, 33.3% disagreed and 4.7% strongly disagreed. Tallied as a whole 17.4% strongly agreed, 34.9% agreed, 31.7% disagreed and 15.8% strongly disagreed.

Table 4

Evaluations Associated With Pay Raises

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	16.6%	30.9%	30.9%	21.4%
Officers	19.0%	42.8%	33.3%	4.7%
Departments	17.4%	34.9%	31.7%	15.8%

To the sixth statement 9.5% of the non-officers strongly agreed that evaluations should be associated with promotions. 59.5% agreed, 19% disagreed and 11.9% strongly

disagreed. 4.7% of the officers strongly agreed 71.4% agreed, 9.5% disagreed and 0%

strongly disagreed. Tallied as a whole 12.6% strongly agreed, 63.4% agreed, 15.8% disagreed

and 7.9% strongly disagreed.

Table 5

Evaluations Associated With Promotions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Non Officers	9.5%	59.5%	19.0%	11.9%
Officers	4.7%	71.4%	9.5%	0
Departments	12.6%	63.4%	15.8%	7.9%

DISCUSSION

The conclusion from this study confirms that the majority of fire departments and the

private sector are still using the traditional top down one-on-one supervisor to subordinate

appraisal. It also concludes that 360 is the wave of the future. "Like it or not, 360-degree

feedback has become an accepted fact in organizations today, and its use is still growing"

(Hollenbeck, 1997, pg. ix). The U. S. Department of Energy, Disney, Arizona State University,

Monsanto, Florida Power and Light, Du Pont, Westinghouse, Motorola, Federal Express, Kino

Hospital, Fidelity Bank and McDonnell-Douglas are some of the innovators of 360-degree

feedback.

The author of this paper concludes that multiple assessors increase validity and that

subordinates and peers are in a better position to observe certain skills of their supervisors and

co-workers such as leadership, guidance, coordination, planning, training, coaching and work

behavior that is often overlooked by management. Through personal

experience supervisors seldom have sufficient opportunity to observe and provide a complete

performance picture of the individual. Development depends on the quality of feedback

received.

In comparison, the survey of WF/RS personnel that participated in the survey showed

that 74.6% had some degree of dissatisfaction with our current performance appraisal system.

87.3% were willing to evaluate their superiors, peers and subordinates. 98.4% were willing to

accept an evaluation from their peers and subordinates. Again this is assuming the survey

questions were answered with total honesty and with proper interpretation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations concluded from this research project is based on the data

compiled from the research itself. An overwhelming percentage (74.6%) of WF/RS personnel

that were surveyed (76.8% of WF/RS personnel were surveyed) showed some degree of

dissatisfaction with our current performance appraisal system. The best time to implement a

change is when people are dissatisfied with the present method.

The data collected coincides with the purpose of the recently developed Wilson Fire

and Rescue Services Evaluation Review Committee to develop a evaluation that would produce

a fair, accurate and non opinionated performance appraisal of our employees.

It is the authors opinion that the growth and development of personnel and the

department will be more probable with the adoption of 360-degree feedback performance

appraisals. It will enhance the growth of our personnel in all aspects as well as in emergency

operations in the utilization of The Incident Command System by receiving feedback from their

superiors, peers and subordinates while on and off the emergency scene.

The information contained in this research paper will be provided to the employee

evaluation review committee to examine and research further for the possibility of

implementation. 360 is the newest alternative for performance appraisals.

If 360-degree feedback is implemented, the author recommends that:

1.   All participants have comprehensive knowledge of 360 feedback.

2.   All raters be assured anonymity.

3.   All personnel trained in how to provide feedback.

4.   All personnel trained in how to receive feedback.

5.   The ratings be kept confidential.

6.   The evaluation should be fairly short.

7.   Should be able to be completed in thirty to forty-five minutes.

8.   There should be a minimum of three evaluators.

9.   The evaluation program be evaluated periodically.

10.   Make modifications as necessary.

11.   Acquire the services of a consulting firm.

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APPENDIX

(SURVEY)

SURVEY

As a student enrolled in The National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, I am compiling data for an applied research project pertaining to employee performance appraisals.

A meeting was held earlier this year to discuss possible revisions in our present employee forms.

An employee evaluation review committee was selected to develop an evaluation form that would produce a fair, accurate, non opinionated evaluation of our employees based on objective measures.

The results of this survey will be documented in my research project and will be forwarded to the Wilson Fire and Rescue Service Employee Evaluation Review Committee.

Please take the time to answer the questions on the attached survey form.

EFOP RESEARCH PROJECT SURVEY

1.   What is your current rank?   _____

2.   I am satisfied with our current evaluation form and process?

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3.   I would be willing to evaluate my superiors, peers and subordinates.

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

4.   I would be willing to accept an evaluation from my peers and subordinates.

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5.   I think evaluations should be associated with pay raises..

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6.   I think evaluations should be associated with promotions.

Strongly agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7.   Additional comments: _____

_____

_____

_____